# For this French senator, Trump is a traitor—and Europe is now alone

By François Diaz-Maurin | March 6, 2025

French Senator Claude Malhuret speaks on the Senate floor on Tuesday, March 4, 2025. (Credit: Public Sénat)

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"Best take on current national affairs that have taken place in the past two months," said one user on the Bluesky social media platform.

"Someone who competently gets to the point of what many of us who deal with this daily already know," wrote another.

These users were not reacting to the latest late-night show, a political analysis in *The Atlantic* or the *New York Times*, or even a TV appearance by a representative from the Democratic party. They were praising a French lawmaker after watching his speech on the French Senate floor on Tuesday, as it made the rounds across Europe and North America. By Thursday morning, social media posts about the speech had been viewed at least hundreds of thousands of times.

Amid the fallout after US President Donald Trump reversed an 80-year-long strategic partnership with Europe to side with Russia in the Ukraine war, Claude Malhuret, a center-right senator who was largely unknown outside France, struck a chord that resonated with both European and American audiences.

During a general session in the French Senate, Malhuret offered an eight-minute-long, extremely direct "intervention" about the war in Ukraine and the security of Europe. For the most part, however, his speech—which among other things called Trump an "incendiary emperor"—was a critique of the Trump administration. Foreign officials and lawmakers don't generally comment about the domestic politics of another country, much less of an ally.

Malhuret's speech was not directed at an American audience. It was meant for the French, as some lawmakers push for quickly increasing defense spending to protect Ukraine and form an independent European defense force. But to many across the Atlantic, it was a clear-eyed take on American politics.

Because the speech comes at what seems a historical moment in the transatlantic relations, a video with English subtitles and an English transcript of the speech are published below.

**Full English transcript of Malhuret's speech:**

Europe is at a critical turning point in its history. The American shield is slipping, Ukraine risks being abandoned, Russia strengthened.

Washington has become the court of Nero, an incendiary emperor, submissive courtiers, and a jester high on ketamine in charge of purging the civil service.

This is a tragedy for the free world, but it is first and foremost a tragedy for the United States. Trump's message is that there is no point in being his ally since he will not defend you, he will impose higher tariffs on you than on his enemies and will threaten to seize your territories while supporting the dictatorships that invade you.

The 'king of the deal' is showing what the art of the deal is on his stomach. He thinks he will intimidate China by lying down in front of Putin, but Xi Jinping, seeing such a submissiveness, is probably accelerating preparations for the invasion of Taiwan.

Never in history has a US President capitulated to the enemy. Never has any one of them supported an aggressor against an ally, trampled on the US Constitution, issued so many illegal executive orders, dismissed judges who could have prevented him from doing so, dismissed the military senior staff in one fell swoop, weakened all checks and balances, and taken control of social media.

This is not an illiberal drift, it is the beginning of the confiscation of democracy. Let us remember that it took only one month, three weeks and two days to bring down the Weimar Republic and its Constitution.

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I have faith in the strength of American democracy, and the country is already protesting. But in one month, Trump has done more harm to America than in four years of his last presidency. We were at war with a dictator, now we are fighting a dictator backed by a traitor.

Eight days ago, at the very moment that Trump was rubbing Macron's back in the White House, the United States voted at the UN with Russia and North Korea against the Europeans demanding the withdrawal of Russian troops.

Two days later, in the Oval Office, the military service shirker was giving war hero Zelensky lessons in morality and strategy before dismissing him like a groom, ordering him to bend or resign.

Tonight, he took another step into infamy by stopping the delivery of weapons that had been promised. What to do in the face of this betrayal? The answer is simple: confront it.

And first of all, let's not be mistaken. The defeat of Ukraine would be the defeat of Europe. The Baltic States, Georgia, Moldova are already on the list. Putin's goal is to return to Yalta, where half the continent was ceded to Stalin.

The countries of the South are waiting for the outcome of the conflict to decide whether they should continue to respect Europe or whether they are now free to trample on it.

What Putin wants is the end of the order put in place by the United States and its allies 80 years ago, with as its first principle the prohibition of acquiring territory by force.

This idea is at the core of the United Nations, where today Americans vote in favor of the aggressor and against the attacked, because the Trumpian vision coincides with that of Putin: a return to spheres of influence, the great powers dictating the fate of small countries.

“Give me Greenland, Panama, and Canada. You can get Ukraine, the Baltics, and Eastern Europe. He can get Taiwan and the China Sea.”

In the dinners of the oligarchs of the Gulf of Mar-a-Lago, they call this “diplomatic realism.”

So we are now standing alone. But the idea that Putin cannot be confronted is false. Contrary to the Kremlin’s propaganda, Russia is in bad shape. In three years, the so-called second largest army in the world has managed to grab only crumbs from a country three times less populated.

Interest rates at 25 percent, the collapse of foreign exchange and gold reserves, the demographic collapse, all show that [Russia] is on the brink of the abyss. The American helping hand to Putin is the biggest strategic mistake ever made in a war.

The shock is violent, but it has a virtue. Europeans are coming out of denial. They understood in one day in Munich that the survival of Ukraine and the future of Europe are in their hands and that they have three imperatives.

Accelerate military aid to Ukraine to compensate for the American abandonment, so that it holds out, and of course to impose its presence and that of Europe in any negotiation.

This will be costly. It will be necessary to end the taboo of using frozen Russian assets [and] circumvent Moscow’s accomplices within Europe itself by a coalition of only the willing countries, which includes, of course, the United Kingdom.

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Second, demand that any agreement be accompanied by the return of kidnapped children, prisoners and absolute security guarantees. After Budapest, Georgia and Minsk, we know what agreements with Putin are worth. These guarantees require sufficient military force to prevent a new invasion.

Finally—and this is the most urgent because it is what will take the most time—we must build a European defense, too-long neglected to the benefit of the American umbrella since 1945 and scuttled since the fall of the Berlin Wall.

It is a Herculean task, but it is on its success or failure that the leaders of today’s democratic Europe will be judged in the history books.

Friedrich Merz has just declared that Europe needs its own military alliance. This is a way to recognize that France has been right for decades in arguing for strategic autonomy.

It remains to build it.

It will be necessary to invest massively, strengthen the European Defense Fund outside the Maastricht debt criteria, harmonize weapons and munitions systems, accelerate the entry into the [European] Union of Ukraine, which is today the leading European army, rethink the place and conditions of nuclear deterrence based on French and British capabilities, relaunch the anti-missile defense and satellite programs.

The plan announced yesterday by Ursula von der Leyen is a very good starting point. And much more will be needed.

Europe will only become a military power again by becoming an industrial power again. In a word, the Draghi report will have to be implemented. For good.

But the real rearmament of Europe is its moral rearmament.

We must convince public opinion against war weariness and fear, and especially in the face of Putin's cronies, the far right and the far left.

They argued again yesterday in the National Assembly, Mr Prime Minister, before you, against European unity, against European defense.

They say they want peace. What neither they nor Trump say is that their peace is capitulation, the peace of defeat, the replacement of "de Gaulle Zelensky" by a "Ukrainian Pétain" at Putin's beck and call. The peace of the collaborators who have refused any aid to the Ukrainians for three years.

Is this the end of the Atlantic Alliance? The risk is great.

But in the last few days, the public humiliation of Zelensky and all the crazy decisions taken during the past month have finally made the Americans react.

Polls are falling. Republican lawmakers are being greeted by hostile crowds in their constituencies. Even *Fox News* is becoming critical.

The Trumpists are no longer in their majesty. They control the executive, Congress, the Supreme Court, and social networks.

But in American history, the defenders of freedom have always prevailed. They are beginning to raise their heads.

The fate of Ukraine is being played out in the trenches, but it also depends on those in the US who want to defend democracy, and here on our ability to unite Europeans, find the means for their common defense, and make Europe the power it once was in history and that it hesitates to become again.

Our parents defeated fascism and communism at great cost.

The task of our generation is to defeat the totalitarianisms of the 21st century.

Long live free Ukraine, long live democratic Europe.